

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-25 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5389

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UY

SUBJ: LEFTIST OPPOSITION PRESS: INCREASING RESTRICTIONS

CINCSO FOR POLAD

REF: A) MVD 2641 AND B) MVD 2944

1. ON OCTOBER 9 GOU ORDERED 30 DAY CLOSURE OF OPPOSITION LEFTIST DAILY "AHORA". CLOSURE WAS REQUESTED BY ARMED FORCES COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF AS RESULT OF ALLEGED "FALSE""AHORA" ARTICLE REPORTING THAT THE MILITARY COMMANDERS HAD OBJECTED TO PROPOSED EDUCATIONAL REFORMS. "AHORA"(40,000 CIRCULATION) WAS PREVIOUSLY CLOSED FOR 10 DAYS ON SEPTEMBER 19 FOR CARRYING TENDENTIOUS STORIES ON CHILEAN EVENTS.

2. TODAY (OCT 11) COMMUNIST PARTY NEWSPAPER "EL POPULAR" (17,000 CIRCULATION) REAPPEARED ON STREETS FOLLOWING 20-DAY CLOSURE ORDERED ON SEPTEMBER 19 FOR ITS CHILEAN COVERAGE. INDEPENDENT LEFTIST WEEKLY "MARCHA" ALSO REAPPEARED TODAY FOLLOWING CLOSURE FOR SIX EDITIONS.

3. ALTHOUGH MOST RECENT "AHORA" CLOSURE TIMED SO AS TO ASSURE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF AT LEAST SOME LEFTIST OPPOSITION MEDIA,
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CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH FRENTE AMPLIO PRESS ALLOWED TO OPERATE ARE

BECOMING INCREASINLY RESTRICTED. LEFTIST PRESS IS SEEKING TO AVOID CLOSURE ORDERS BY COUCHING CRITICISM OF GOU ACTIONS IN INCREASINGLY INDIRECT FORM AND BY CITING STORIES PREVIOUSLY CARRIED BY CONSERVATIVE URUGUAYAN PRESS OR IN PRESITGIOUS FOREING MEDIA. BUT 30-DAY "AHORA" CLOSURE IS LONGEST TO DAT ORDERED BY EXECUTIVE AND "AHORA"

ALLEGED VIOLATION APPEARS AS A RATHER THIN PRETEXT, ESPECIALLY AS NON-LEFTIST PRESS IS EQUALLY FOND OF SPECULATING ON GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES. "AHORA" PUBLISHER, PRIOR TO CLOSURE, TOLD EMBASSY PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND INFORMATION OFFICERS THAT ADDITIONAL CLOSURES COULD FINANCIALLY DESTROY PAPER. HE ALSO QUESTIONED UTILITY OF CONTINUING TO PUBLISH PAPER IF GOVERNMENTAL RESTRICTIONS PROHIBITED THEM FROM RUNNING A TRUE OPPOSITION PRESS.

4. MOST RECENT ACTION AGAINST "AHORA", TOGETHER WITH PROSECUTION OF "EL POPULAR" BY MILITARY COURT (REFTEL B), SUGGESTS THAT GOU OBJECTIVE MAY GO BEYOND LIMITING OPPOSITION LEFTIST PRESS TO THROTTLING IT. "AHORA'S" FATE IS LIKELY TO BE THE SAME AS "ULTIMA HORA'S", THE LEFTIST AFTERNOON DAILY WHICH FAILED TO REAPPEAR AFTER RECIEVING A 20-DAY CLOSURE ORDER ON AUG 10. BUT WHILE LOSE OF IRRESPONSIBLE "ULTIMATE HORA" OF RATHER SMALL IMPORTANCE, CESSATION OF "AHORA" WOULD BE DOUBLY REGRETFUL: FORCED DIS-APPEARANCE WOULD INJURE GOU'S INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE, AND "AHORA'S" DEPARTURE WOULD STILL THE MOST MODERATE AND, DURING LAST YEAR, MOST BALANCED LEFTIST COMMENTATOR ON THE UNITED STATES. LEFTIST MEDIA COVERAGE WOULD THEN BE LARGELY MONOPOLY OF US-BAITING, MOSCOW-SYCOPHANT "EL POPULAR" WHICH, IN ONE GUISE OR ANOTHER, WILL TRY TO CONTINUE PUBLISHING. SIRACUSA

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